



**– For Immediate Release –**  
Monday, March 9, 2009

## **IIMPACT DETECTIVES INVESTIGATE DROP HOUSE IN WEST PHOENIX**

*Eighteen people rescued, five suspected human smugglers arrested*

On March 7, 2009, detectives with the multi-agency Illegal Immigration Prevention & Apprehension Co-op Team (IIMPACT) served a search warrant on a suspected drop house at 2409 N. 107th Drive in Avondale. IIMPACT is comprised of personnel from the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Phoenix Police Department, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Officers from these agencies located 23 people in the home and the investigation revealed that 18 of the 23 individuals were victims and the other 5 were suspected human smugglers, or “coyotes”. All the victims were turned over to ICE. The 5 suspected human smugglers were arrested. Entry into the house was made by the DPS Special Operations Unit.

IIMPACT identified 17 of the victims as Mexican National and one was a Guatemalan National. All of the victims were male except for one female, a 22-year-old Mexican National. The investigation showed the victims had been recently smuggled into the country and were being extorted while being transported to different locations throughout the United States.

All of the victims had been physically abused by the “coyotes” to some extent with two of the victims, including the female, being transported to a local hospital for treatment. A 9mm Ruger semi-automatic handgun and two baseball bats were found at the residence and believed to have been used in the assaults and threats. This is the first case IIMPACT has worked in which threats of De-capitation were made by “coyotes” unless ransoms were paid by family members. Detectives located \$1,900 in U.S. currency, an alien smuggling ledger and other items consistent with human smuggling activities which were seized.

Investigators believe an attempted sexual assault was committed against one of the male victims by the “coyotes”. Additionally, the “coyotes” would only provide food to those victims whose families had paid ransoms. The victims who were allowed to eat were placed across the room from those who hadn’t eaten, and made to eat in front of these

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starving victims. Some of the victims reported to have gone without food for five to six days.

Arrested: Hugo Bayala-Reyes, 29, Juan Carlos Briones-Castro, 22, Oscar Roberto Montellano-Mora, 22, Juan Carlos Sanchez-Tecezcalle, 32, Victor Hugo Tevares-Enciso, 37.

Charges: One count (each) human smuggling, one count (each) theft by extortion, one count (each) kidnapping, one count (each) armed robbery, one count (each) attempted sexual assault. All five suspects are Mexican Nationals and were booked into the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Jail in Phoenix. Photos of the suspects, interior and exterior of the drop house are available at <http://marketing.azdps.gov/Public/photos/avondaledrophouse.zip>

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